

Hospital Medical Directors Meet

VSH Medical Director Tom Simpatico met this week with medical directors of the designated hospitals and Retreat Healthcare. The group expects to continue meeting in person or by phone in the coming weeks. The agenda includes achieving a shared understanding of when it is clinically appropriate to transfer individuals from VSH to community hospitals. There is general agreement as to when an individual should be transferred to VSH for more intensive treatment, but there is less clarity about when an individual who has achieved partial recovery ought to move back to a less-intensive treatment environment in a hospital that preferably is closer to home.

Children's Grant Will Not Be Pursued

The Department of Health and the Agency of Human Services have decided against applying for a SAMHSA grant to develop integrated home and community-based service and supports for children and youth with severe emotional disturbances and their families by encouraging the development and expansion of effective and enduring systems of care. (See March 25 Update) These are six-year grants of up to \$8 million to develop effective services. The match requirement for these grants goes from 1-to-3 in year one to 2-to-1 in years five and six.

State officials determined that Vermont would be unable to meet the match requirements for grant years 4, 5 and 6. We will remain mobilized as a team focused on this population and hope to develop a strategy for match before the next request for applications.

Fletcher Allen Health Care Contract

Health Department and FAHC representatives met again this week to continue discussing the proposed scope of a clinical services contract that would begin on July 1. Weekly meetings are anticipated for the next month or so as the details are worked out.

Ockert Report

The Ockert inspection report (see April 15 Update) has been posted on the web at www.healthyvermonters.info/mh/mhindex.shtml.

Agency Designation Process

Health Department staff are to meet today with their counterparts from the Department of Aging and Independent Living to discuss resuming the agency designation process, with a target date of July 1. The two departments now share the designation duties that were handled by the Department of Developmental and Mental Health Services prior to Agency of Human Services reorganization.

SAMHSA Transformation Grant

The mental health transformation grant stakeholder advisory group met this week. Work continues on preparing Vermont's grant application, which has a June 1 deadline. The group meets again on May 11.

Medicare Part D Training Under Way

Training began Tuesday on the "Medicare Modernization Act: Medicaid Part D for Persons Dually Eligible for Medicare and Medicaid." Tuesday's session was titled "Limited-Income Subsidy." Further training sessions are as follows:

- June 8, 1–4 p.m., Medicare Modernization Act 101 and Deeming Process for Limited-Income Subsidy
- July 12, 9 a.m.–noon, Repeat of June 8 training
- October 12, 9 a.m.–noon, Enrolling in Part D, Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs) and Wrap
- November 10, 9 a.m.–noon, Repeat of October 12 training

These sessions are broadcast to all Vermont Interactive Television sites. Registration is free. Contact KathyHas@ahs.state.vt.us. Health Department contact person is Melinda Murtaugh at mmurtaugh@vdh.state.vt.us.

Background—The new Medicare prescription drug coverage (Medicare Part D) takes effect on January 1, 2006. For individuals dually eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, Medicaid prescription drug coverage will end on December 31, 2005. These individuals will have to choose Medicare coverage from among new, competing prescription drug plans to be offered later this year.

Vermont's designated agencies provide mental health services for approximately 2,200 dually eligible adults: 1,300 with severe mental illness in Community Rehabilitation and Treatment programs and another 900 adults served by Adult Outpatient programs.

For these clients of the public mental health system, we have three primary areas of concern as they move from Medicaid to Medicare for their prescription drug coverage:

- (1) **Confusion:** The potential is great for clients to confuse being found eligible for low-income subsidies (letters from the Social Security Administration will start going out in mid-May) with actual enrollment in a Medicare Part D plan (the initial enrollment period is November 15, 2005-May 15, 2006).
- (2) **Changing psychiatric medications:** The new prescription drug plans may be less comprehensive than coverage under Medicaid. We have heard spoken assurances from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services that clients who are stabilized on certain psychiatric medications will be able to stay on those medications regardless of what the new plans offer, but those assurances have yet to be put into writing.
- (3) **Economic Burden to Clients:** Some clients may have to pay as much as \$3,600 in out-of-pocket expenses for prescription drugs because of the way the new coverage is structured financially. This effect could fall especially heavily upon individuals with the most disabilities.

Deputy Search

The deputy search advisory group will be sent a candidate screening tool next week and asked for feedback. They begin reviewing applications soon, selecting candidates for phone interviews. Group members include Linda Corey, Jerry Goessel, Judith Hayward, Robin Yandel, Marty Roberts, Ken Liberto, Cathy Holsopple, Shaun Donahue, Bob Pierattini, Terry Rowe, Rick Palmisano, Beth Tanzman, Charlie Biss, Frank Kalibat, and Ed Paquin. A progress report on the search effort will be made to the Adult Standing Committee at its next meeting, on May 11.

VSH Census

The Vermont State Hospital census was 51 as of midnight Thursday night. The average census for the previous 45 days was between 45 and 46.